

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00

OMB-01 AGR-20 DRC-01 /082 W
----- 107257

R 280555Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 96

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1445

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ECON, EFIN, TH

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-HOARDING CAMPAIGN

REF: BANGKOK 0534

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. REFTEL REPORTED THAT THE CABINET HAD GIVEN THE COMMERCE MINISTRY WIDE AUTHORITY TO MONITOR, INSPECT INVENTORIES, AND, UNDER SOME CIRCUMSTANCES, CONFISCATE COMMODITIES WHERE HOARDING IS ALLEGED TO BE A CAUSE OF SHARP PRICE INCREASES. SINCE THEN, MAJOR GOVERNMENT ACTIONS IN ECONOMIC FIELD HAVE CONCENTRATED ON VARIOUS MEASURES TO RESTRAIN, OR PREVENT, PRICE INCREASES AND AT THE SAME TIME INSURE THAT SUPPLIES CONTINUE TO MOVE TO THE MARKET.

2. THE GOVERNMENT HAS REQUIRED THAT ALL MANUFACTURERS,
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WHOLESALEERS OR RETAILERS HOLDING LARGE AMOUNTS (DEFINED

FOR EACH COMMODITY) OF DESIGNATED COMMODITIES FILE AN INITIAL REPORT OF STOCKS AND STORAGE PLACES AND UPDATE THE REPORT TWICE A MONTH. THE COMMODITIES SO FAR DESIGNATED ARE PAPER AND PULP, STEEL RODS, VEGETABLE OIL, DETERGENT, AND GUNNY SACKS.

3. IF POLICE INSPECTION FINDS UNREPORTED GOODS, SUCH GOODS ARE SUBJECT TO CONFISCATION AND SALE BY THE GOVERNMENT. STUDENTS FROM THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER (NNSCT) HAVE ACCOMPANIED POLICE ON INSPECTIONS AND THE NSCT HAS CALLED FOR VIGOROUS ENFORCEMENT OF THE CONFISCATION AUTHORITY. IN THE FIRST TEN DAYS OF THE INSPECTION PERIOD BEGINNING JANUARY 14, THERE WERE SOME 300 INSPECTIONS CARRIED OUT. FOUR CONFISCATIONS WERE MADE AND IN SEVEN OTHER INSTANCES GOODS WERE ATTACHED SUBJECT TO CONFISCATION. IN AT LEAST ONE INSTANCE THE STUDENTS CHARGED FALSIFICATION OF REPORTING RECORDS AND POLICE COLLUSION TO HIDE THE EVIDENCE OF WRONGDOING. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO JUDGE THE LONG TERM EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT MEASURES GENERAL COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS HAS BEEN THE RULE DESPITE SOME CHARGES OF WRONGDOING. THERE HAS BEEN STABILIZATION OF PRICES DURING THE SHORT TIME THAT THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN WAGED, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO NEW WAVE OF STRIKE ACTIVITY DESPITE THE OVERALL INCREASE IN THE COST OF LIVING. GOVERNMENT FEARS OF SUCH ARE REAL, HOWEVER, AND THERE IS ALSO THE DANGER OF ALIENATION OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IF THE CONTROLS COME TO BE REGARDED AS TOO STRICT AND ARBITRARY. THE PRESS FOR A FEW DAYS CARRIED STORIES ABOUT PORK BEING WITHHELD FROM THE MARKET BY THE RETAILERS. MINISTER OF COMMERCE TOLD AMBASSADOR IN CONFIDENCE THAT PORK MERCHANTS APPEARED TO DESERVE AN INCREASE IN THE FIXED PRICE, BUT THAT FOR HIM TO AGREE WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO SUICIDE*. HE EXPRESSED A NEED FOR A PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF THE COSTS THAT MUST BE ADDED ALONG THE DISTRIBUTION CHAIN. SUBSEQUENTLY, JANUARY 28, AN AGRICULTURE MINISTRY OFFICIAL IN A PRESS REPORT URGED THE COMMERCE MINISTRY TO RECOGNIZE THE FACT OF INCREASED COSTS IN PORK PRODUCTION
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BY RAISING PRICES; HE ALSO PROPOSED ELIMINATION OF THE MIDDLEMAN. END CONFIDENTIAL.
KINTNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC STABILITY, COMMODITIES, SUPPLIES, STORAGE, PRICES, STOCKPILES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BANGKO001445
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: DG ALTERED
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740113/aaaaalju.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BANGKOK 0534
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 JUL 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <27 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-HOARDING CAMPAIGN
TAGS: ECON, EFIN, TH
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005